

Facet Testing: Design and logic

Findings from July, 2016

The good

- The new facet design greatly increased the visibility and usability of the filter area. Users in the Control Group took an average of *2 minutes and 30 seconds* to find the facet list. Users who saw the updated facet designs took *25 seconds* on average to locate the filter area.
- Both forms of filter logic were easy for users to get the hang of, although the majority of users expected the new (OR based) filter logic.
- Users of the new design had an easier time 'reading' which filters they had previously applied to a collection page.

The not so good

- Collection and sub collection hierarchy was confusing for users. Users did not expect to see (sub)collections interspersed with items.
- Users had trouble returning to the homepage and often looked for a link back on the far left of the navbar.
- Users wanted more guidance in using Archive.org. Users were unsure of what types of content to look for and wanted to browse by genre.

High-level themes

- The new filter design greatly decreased the amount of time that it took for users to locate collection facets and also made it easier for users to tell which facets were currently applied. All users of the new design said it was easy to use, fell within familiar or preferred design patterns and acted as they had expected.
- The new OR based facet logic was slightly more predictable (and preferred) for first time users. However users were generally flexible and amenable to which ever facet logic was present in the version of the site they performed their session in.
- First time users wanted more guidance into the Archive's collections. Users were quickly overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of the Archive's items and collections. Users wanted to be able to view content by entity, event (context) or genre and wanted better signaling of where 'high quality' or unique items in the Archive might be located.
- The navbar and iconography were hard for many users to comprehend. Users often had trouble identifying the icons and expected - once clicked - for the icons to open to a new page or act as a filter.

15 new users recruited from Usertesting.com performed 6 tasks on the homepage and collections pages through an unmoderated and recorded session.

The goals of the sessions were to:

- Determine which (if either) method to approaching facet relationships is the most intuitive and easy for users to learn and use.
 - Are the filters easily recognizable and findable?
 - Can the user successfully utilize filters to locate relevant information?
 - Do the facets respond in a way that users expect?
- What are users first impressions of Archive.org?
- How do users initiate a search for an item of personal interest to them on Archive.org?

About
the Test

Users were broken up into three groups:

AND Facet Logic

Tested on Tracey's Dev Box
*Testing of new facet design
with current facet logic*

Mixed OR Facet Logic

Tested on Tracey's Dev Box
*Testing of new facet design
with new facet logic*

Control Group

Tested on the live site
*Testing of current facet design
with current facet logic*

Homepage

- The 'About' blurb on the homepage was usually the first element that stood out to users. Users were attracted to wide variety of media types present on the Archive as well as the counts per media type.
- The overall look and feel of the homepage and collection pages felt 'drab,' 'dated,' or 'boring' to a number of users (particularly British users). These comments were particularly focused on the background and collection tile colors on the homepage.
- Although users liked the images on the collection tiles, some users expressed that the tiles looked 'messy' or were hard to navigate. Users wanted the collections on the homepage to be organized either alphabetically or by subject matter and the infinite list of collections was overwhelming for some users.
- The Wayback Machine search box in the navbar attracted a lot of attention from users but was confusing for most users. On first inspection some users thought it was a banner ad based on its placement and the design of the logo.

Collections Page

- Collection hierarchy was confusing for users. The relationship between the collections on the homepage, subcollections, media type based collections and individual items was unclear for most users. Subcollections were generally read by users as links to a new page which would have more information about a single entity, event or genre along with relevant items.
- The relationship between items in a collection was unclear on Community collections and the Etree collection (most users did not recognize any of the bands on the Etree collection and were therefore unsure what the collection was built around). Users wanted more information about a collection on the collection tile and at the top of the collection. Very few users navigated to the About tab.
- Users had a hard time exiting the collection page. Those who wanted to see more items of the same mediatype appeared to be unsure of where to navigate to. Many users returned to the homepage to begin a new search.

Facets

- Case-sensitive facets (Rock vs rock) were frustrating to users who wanted to see all of the items associated with a specific topic or subject. Even with the OR facet logic in place, users still had trouble ensuring that all of the relevant facets (upper, lower, mixed case) were selected. This lead to only a subset of all results being exposed.
- Users quickly found the 'More' link, but were overwhelmed by the total number of facets. The original design for this page is a paginated model, something a users suggested during testing. Additionally, users expected this list to be in alphabetical order.
- The new facet design greatly increased the visibility and usability of the filter area. Users in the Control Group took an average of *2 minutes and 30 seconds* to find the facet list. Users who saw the updated facet designs took *25 seconds* on average to locate the filter area.
- The new OR based facet logic was slightly more predictable (and preferred) for first time users. However users were generally flexible and amenable to which ever facet logic was present in the version of the site they performed their session in.

Free Explore Time

- First time users wanted more guidance into the Archive's collections. Users were quickly overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of the Archive's items and collections. Users wanted to be able to view content by entity, event (context) or genre and wanted better signaling of where 'high quality' or unique items in the Archive might be located.
- Many users began their free explore time by looking for a way to browse content within a specific media type. Users were quick to find the icons on the navigation bar, but were surprised that the icons did not lead directly to 'media specific' pages (eg. images.google.com or books.google.com). Additionally some of the icons were confusing to users especially Audio and Software.
- Community and media type collections were often overwhelming for users, who wanted to be able to browse the collection as a way to learn what types of items might be included in the collection. Commonly they looked for signals based on genre, similar to a user browsing on Netflix.

Media Type Filtered Search

Although users generally had a positive reaction to the wide variety of media types featured on the Internet Archive, users - especially during the free explore task - looked for ways to limit their browsing and searching by media type. These were users who had successfully utilized the collection facets and had noted the ability to filter by media type and yet they still looked for ways to narrow before beginning their search.

Recommendation



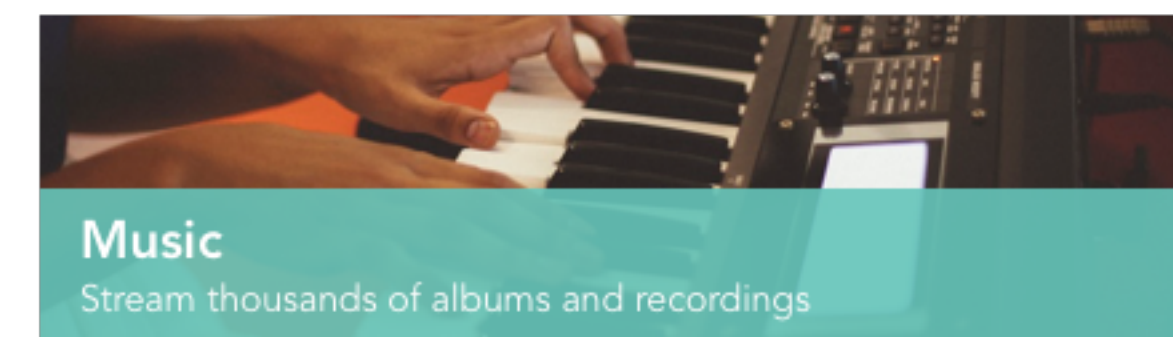
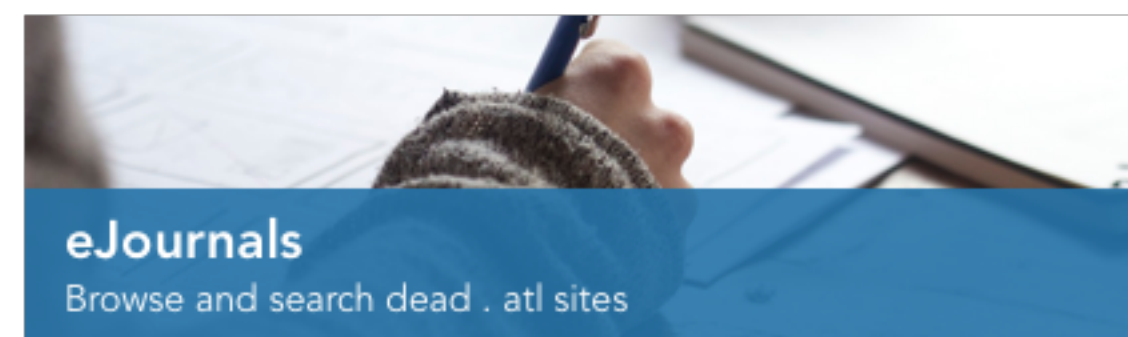
Suggested 'Search Filter' Design

Enabling users to quickly narrow down their search from the search bar could help users feel confident and in control of their searches and reach relevant information faster. This filter area could also be used to surface advanced search throughout the website.

Create a Home for Each Media Type

Most users began looking for an item of interest to them by looking for a way to browse content within a specific media type. Users looked for a page that was specific to a single media type as a way to specify before exploring by genre, event or contributing institution.

Recommendation



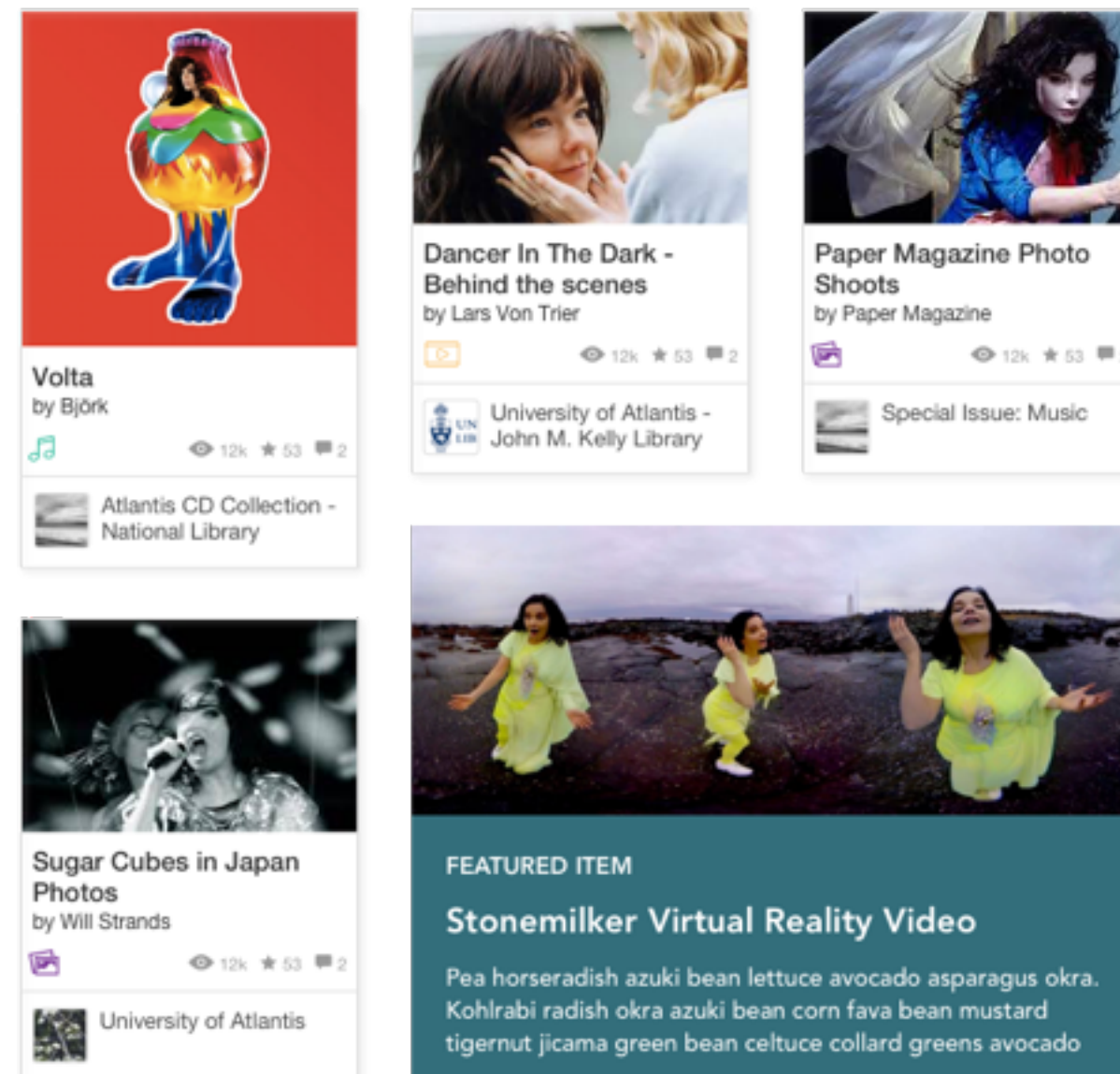
Visual Showcasing of Media Type Pages on the Homepage

Create a 'home' for each media type that is visually more similar to a homepage than a collection, including visually highlighted collections or genres as well as featured content. Link to these pages through a showcase on the homepage and through a redesign of the navigation bar.

Highlighting of Unique and High Quality Content

The amount and breadth of the items available to users on the Archive was exciting but often overwhelming for the majority of users who were unsure of what *specifically* the was available through the Internet Archive.

Recommendation



Suggested 'Featured Item' Design

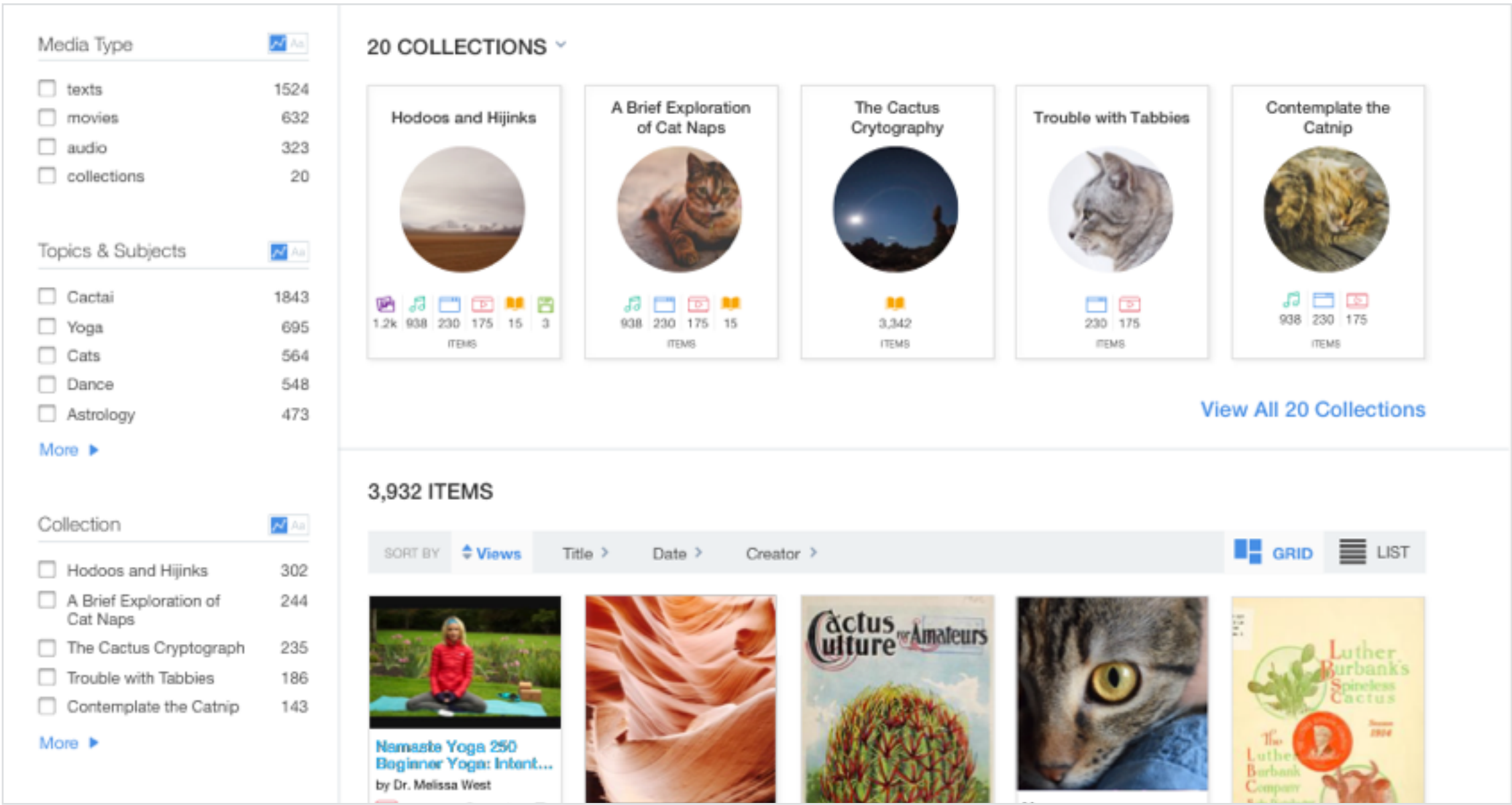
Create a new UI element that would enable Internet Archive staff, partners and collection creators to highlight and annotate featured items in a collection.

These items could appear mixed in among other items in the collection and serve as a way to guide users to special items. The space for annotation would allow for contributors to share what makes this item noteworthy. These featured items could also be displayed on the homepage, as a way to browse across collections.

Collection and Sub Collection Hierarchy

The intermixing of collections and items on collection pages was disorienting for some users

Recommendation



Suggested changes to the collection page

In this design sub collections are separated from item results on the collection page. Additionally collection tile height is standardized as some users thought that larger collection tiles were a sign of a larger collection.

Navigation Bar + Iconography

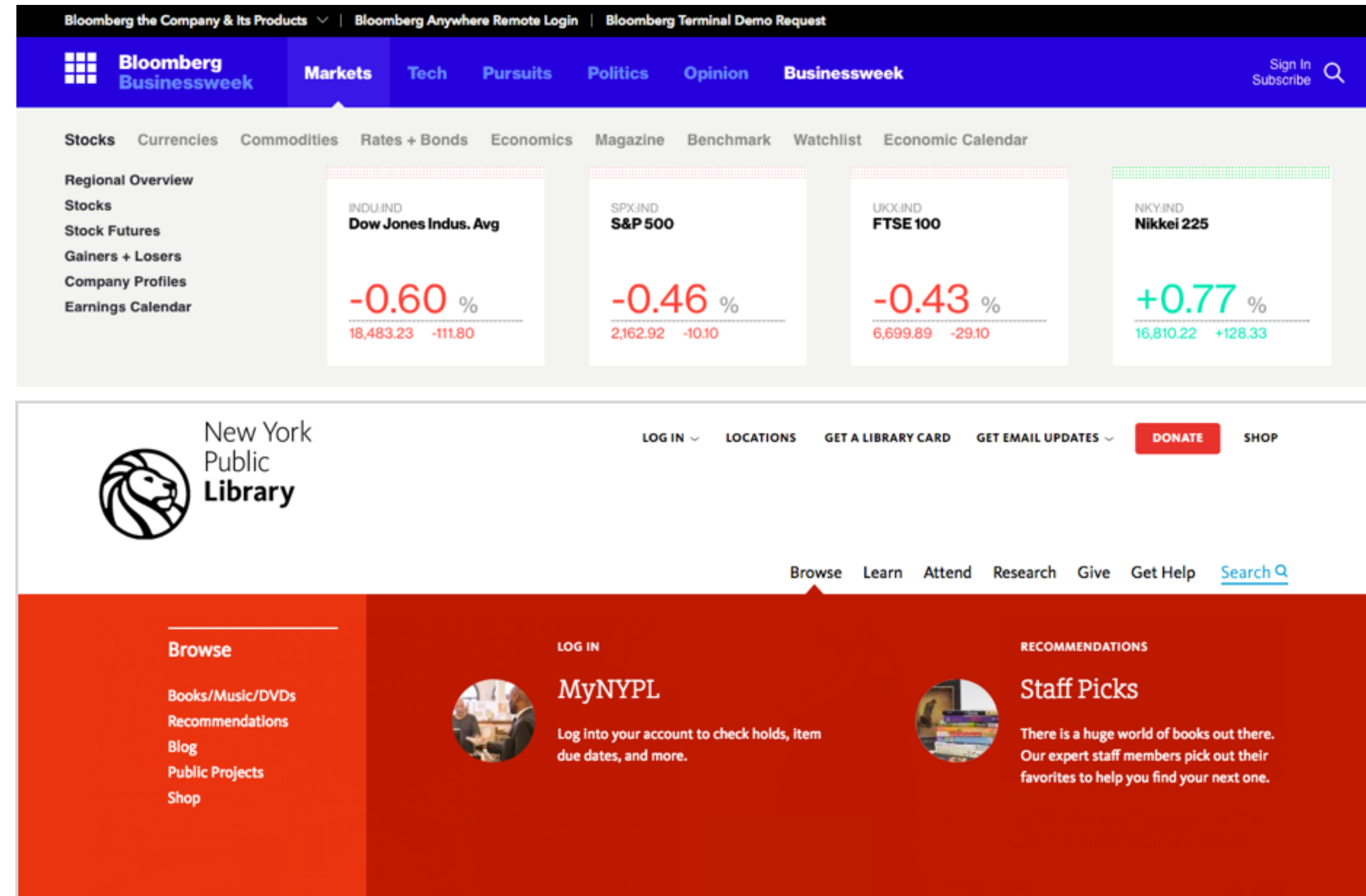
Some users had trouble returning to the homepage once they navigated away and often looked for a link back on the far left of the navbar. More generally, the 'Top Hat' (clicking on a item opens above the navigation bar) was disorienting for some users, who expected the navigation bar to have a dropdown. Additionally, some users expected clicking on a media type icon to open to a new page or act as a filter over the current page.

Legibility of icons may also be a problem as users relied primarily on 'helper text' to decode icons.

Recommendation

Our navigation bar is burdened by the quantity of content that needs to be accessible through it. Many other websites face similar challenges and looking at how they approach this design problem could help to influence further designs on the Internet Archive (please see the next slide for some examples). Higher visibility (expansion) of the search bar, a 'sticky' navigation bar, reorganization of submenus and increased text (over iconography) should be explored.

Examples of High Content Navigation Bars



Key Insights
and Findings
Continued

These two navigation bars from Bloomberg and NYPL, are content heavy but create clear pathways for users to access relevant information through color contrast, space between elements and clear navigation indicators. The Bloomberg navigation bar also includes a top bar connecting all Bloomberg web properties together through a single navigation system

Additional Testing with Current Users

Testing the two facet logics with current users of the Internet Archive would help to better understand the types of tasks that expert users of the site rely on collection and search facets for. The new users tested in this round of testing for the most part seemed amenable to either facet model, as both are models they come across while using the internet. It should be stated that the OR model seemed to be more expected by new users, however input from current users could help to determine which model is a better fit for Archive.org.

A/B Testing of Both Facet Logics

An alternative to more formal testing with current users, or incase current users are still split between AND and OR facet logic, live A/B testing of both facet logics would be helpful. Success metrics would need to be defined in order to determine which logic was the most successful.

Questions, comments, or concerns?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me on Slack,
in person or by email at carolyn@archive.org